

9. REVIEW OF WASTE MANAGEMENT – UPDATE REPORT

REPORT OF: Mark Fisher, Head of Leisure and Sustainability
Contact Officer: David Harper, Business Unit Leader – Waste and Outdoor Services
Email: david.harper@midsussex.gov.uk Tel: 01444 477487
Wards Affected: All
Key Decision: No
Report to: Scrutiny Committee for Leisure and Community
2 March 2016

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the current performance of the Mid Sussex Waste Management service, ahead of the formal review of the West Sussex - Joint Waste Materials Resource Management Strategy 2005 – 2035.
2. The report also outlines possible Waste Management options which the Council may wish to consider during 2016/17, to enable the Council to determine the type and level of service which it wishes to deliver in the future.

Recommendation

3. **The Committee is requested to note the contents of the report.**
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Background and current performance

4. This report looks into the current position with regard to recycling performance and following the last report to Scrutiny committee on the 10th February 2016, looks at potential “Road Map” options to improve future performance.
5. Recycling performance has reached a plateau in recent years and despite garden waste and dry recycling tonnage still increasing year on year, increasing landfill means a smaller proportion of overall waste is being recycled.
6. The trends have been seen across the county and the reasons behind the change in performance are reviewed by the Waste Partnership on a quarterly basis at the Inter Authority Waste Group.
7. In 2014/15 the garden waste collection service collected 5558 tonnes, however the tonnage is both seasonal and varies dependant on climatic changes from year to year, with wet and warm years having greater growth in grass and shrubs cuttings and colder and dryer years seeing reduced tonnage. In previous years the garden waste tonnage was 5410 tonnes in 2013/14 and 5032 tonnes in 2012/13. Officers have estimated that the current year may see a decline of several hundred tonnes, despite an increase in subscribers, due to the weather conditions this year. The expansion of the garden waste service will increase the tonnage collected by approximately 1600 tonnes once fully implemented.
8. In 2014/15 13,272 tonnes of dry recycle was collected, this compares with 13,204 tonnes in 2013/14 and 13,407 tonnes in 2012/13.
9. The drive across the West Sussex Waste Partnership to improve recycling quality since 2011/12 has seen a number of projects undertaken to both inform residents and tackle poor recycling behaviour. As poor recycling is rejected, many Councils have seen a

lower collection tonnage as a result, but most have seen a steady increase in landfill. Investment to support education / guidance for the community has been the preferred route to change behaviour. However in the future, enforcement could be an additional option for consideration if felt appropriate.

10. The Waste Partnership is currently working up a number of options for improving recycling performance in terms of increased tonnage. This project is known as the Recycling Road Map and will produce a series of costed business cases to be considered over the course of the coming year.

What is our current position?

11. In 2014/15 our combined dry recycling and composting rate reduced by approximately 2% to 39.52%, which despite increasing collections of the dry recycling material and year on year increases in garden waste collection subscribers, failed to keep pace with growth in residual waste.
12. The Council is currently undertaking an extensive Recycling Quality Project (RQP) which aims to deliver new information to every resident in an individual property or in communal flats. The two year project has been funded to the value of £58k by the Council following an extensive pilot study. The project commenced in 2014 with the installation of signage at communal blocks. Due to changes to the permitted dry recycling materials accepted by the recycling plant, with the addition of mixed plastics (Pots Trays and Tubs) from April 2014, the Council's roll out of new waste information was delayed to enable the waste media to include the additional mixed plastics information. The project is being rolled out crew by crew, and requires training for the collection crews to enable monitoring of the collected material, once bin information packs have been distributed to residents. The project will standardise the quality checks undertaken by the freighter crews and will see a reduction in the recycling tonnage being collected, due to greater rejection of bins as we try to maintain and improve the quality of recycle. The project is due to be completed in the autumn of 2016. The evaluation results from sampling at the Materials Recycling Facility following the introduction of the survey have seen steady improvement in the last year.
13. The Council is currently in year 9 of the existing 21 year Waste Management contract with Serco Ltd. The Council has a legal requirement to review our recycling methodology in 2016/17 including the recycling compliance "Practicability Test" set out in the Waste Regulations. An assessment of future collections of the 4 key dry recyclables on the grounds of Technically, Environmentally and Economically Practicable "TEEP", is triggered by the requirement to specify the replacement collection vehicle fleet. This needs to be combined with the current review process, so as to be able to plot the direction of travel and service requirements for waste management for the remainder of the contract.

Why has the recycling rate reduced?

14. There are a number of reasons why our recycling performance has reduced;
 - The collection of road sweeping arising's has increased steadily in the last three years from collecting 1000 tonnes in 2011/12 to just under 2000 tonnes in 2014/15. Whilst the roads are increasingly cleaner, this tonnage is counted as part of our residual waste and therefore reduces our recycling rates.
 - 2014/15 was a rather "light year" with garden waste tonnage presented, and although this is a seasonal waste stream, the weights were down for the first half of 2015 calendar year, which will impact on both 2014/15 and 2015/16 years performance.

- A further aspect of the Recycling Quality Project has been the suspension of collections of dry recycling in the worst performing communal blocks, as previous collections risked being rejected at the transfer stations. In addition mop up operations of individual bins following bin tagging, has also lost recycle tonnage as it is required to be sent to landfill.
- Increasing house building is adding more waste to the total waste stream (all elements) year on year. This could see an additional 450 tonnes added through growth in housing numbers assuming 500 extra properties per year, including additional recycling and garden waste collection tonnage.
- Loss of paper tonnage from our bring site paper banks, following the closure of one of the major paper mills in February 2015. These banks were used for disposal of shredded paper, which would otherwise cause problems at the materials recycling facility.

Recent activity to improve recycling quality

15. The West Sussex Waste Partnership has undertaken a series of projects to improve recycling across the county and this has included ongoing investment into the educational programme in Primary schools in West Sussex, through the Waste Busters programme.

Waste Busters

16. Within the existing waste strategy the Waste Partnership needed a delivery vehicle for ensuring key messages were delivered to primary schools in West Sussex. The West Sussex Waste Partnership procured the services of "Waste Buster" to ensure that high quality waste information was provided to schools with online and downloadable content linked to the national curriculum. The Waste Buster contract has performance targets to ensure that new schools were actively sought and that the service was being fully utilised. Waste Busters reached over 235 schools in 2014/15.

Low performing areas

17. Other forms of educational material have been tested within the Waste Partnership including the development of a series of tools know as Low Performing Areas (LPA's) , these are themes rather than geographical areas, and each theme represented an operational problem and a suitable response was piloted across the County by District and Borough Council's. The LPA's include:-
 - Bags for Flats
 - Communal Bin Store Signage
 - Wet Cardboard
 - Student accommodation
 - Language barriers
 - Caravan Parks

Waste Composition Analysis

18. The Waste Partnership undertook a waste composition analysis in the autumn of 2015, this detailed investigation of the recycling characteristics of residents, is helping to identify and develop communication techniques that would be the most effective way to maximise recycling collections and reducing landfill.

19. It is clear that considerable amounts of recyclable material are simply going in the wrong bin. With the simplicity of a comingled collection system, it is really important that we establish the barriers to recycling and that we target the easy wins with residents.

Options for improved recycling performance

20. The current review of the waste strategy will not make specific decisions about the nature of the waste service to be collected in the future. However for the purposes of specifying the direction of travel for the remainder of the Mid Sussex's waste management contract, it will be useful to explore potential options for improving recycling and waste reduction drawn from successful implementation elsewhere, including:-
 - Changes to collections methods (additional materials such as textiles, small electrical items, food waste).
 - Changes to frequency of collections
 - Changes to wheeled bin provision, (possibly larger for recycling bins and reduced sizes for landfill).
 - Additional collection vehicles, bins, resources.
 - Changes to the disposal and processing infrastructure provided by West Sussex County Council, driven by factors such as growth in housing numbers and closure of existing landfill.
 - Initial and sustained communications material, delivering key messages in a format that residents wish to receive such information.
 - Public willingness to constructively participate.

Recycling Road Map Options

21. The Waste Partnerships initial work on the Recycling Road Map project was undertaken by Waste Consultants Ricardo AEA.
22. The development of options is being planned as a series of projects in 2016. An initial feasibility study of food waste will be completed by the spring 2016, as it forms the largest single fraction of the residual waste that could be re-processed and turned into compost (which counts towards recycling targets). The combined impact of implementing all or many of these options together could create a step change in recycling performance, similar or greater than the introduction of the alternative weekly collections (AWC) in 2007.
23. Initial assumptions about yield for the new collection options are now being updated with specific information gathered from the food composition analysis. The business case for each option will need to include the initial set up costs as well as the ongoing revenue costs and operational implications for the District and Borough Councils and the bulking, transportation and processing costs by the County Council.
24. The second option that the Waste Partnership is currently looking exploring is the recovery of road sweepings (fines) and to recycle that material for use in the construction industry. For Mid Sussex, this is approximately 2000 tonnes of sweepings per annum. If a successful business case for this option can be produced, Mid Sussex would be able to claim any recovered tonnage (as we do for composting) and count towards our recycling figures.
25. Targeted communications is the single biggest factor in changing perceptions and residents activities to prevent waste and improve the levels of recycling e.g. website guidance, service leaflets, social media or personal engagement.

26. Government funding of WRAP to provide a central advisory body to issue guidance for local government waste and resources management, has produced comprehensive advice and guidance documents and supported national campaigns such as the popular “love food hate waste”.

Conclusions

27. Each of these options in the Road Map will be worked up into detailed business cases and these will be brought before the Council once a detailed assessment has been made across the Waste Partnership.
28. Government advice on the level of expenditure per household recommended for waste communications is rarely met, however with new technologies soon to be available to the Council and with very detailed information about what targeted recycling materials are currently being thrown away as landfill, future communications will be absolutely instrumental in changing future recycling behaviours.

Financial Implications

29. This report has no financial implications.

Risk Management Implications

30. It is not considered that this report carries any particular risks to be reported.

Equality and Customer Service Implications

31. Future decisions arising from the implementation of the revised Waste Strategy will have customer service implications; however this report has no specific implications.

Other Material Implications

32. There are no legal implications as a direct consequence of this report.

Background papers

None.